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SUBJECT: THE DEPUTY SECRETARY'S MEETING WITH HUNGARIAN
AMBASSADOR SOMOGYI

(U) Classified by Deputy Secretary Negroponte, for reasons
1.4 (B) and (D)

1. (U) Participants:

U.S.

The Deputy Secretary
Assistant Chief of Protocol Gladys Boluda
EUR Acting DAS Judith Garber
D Staff Gustavo Delgado
Marc Nordberg, EUR note taker

Hungary

Appointed Ambassador Ferenc Somogyi
DCM Viktor Szederkenyi

2. (U) SUMMARY. On August 29, the Deputy Secretary
accepted credentials from Ferenc Somogyi, incoming

Hungarian Ambassador to the U.S. The two discussed the
main issues in the bilateral relationship, including the
visa waiver program, Cuba, Kosovo, and Russia. Somogyi
said he looked forward to continuing Hungary's support for
U.S.. efforts on a range of regional issues; with the
exception of visas, he saw no problems in the U.S.-
Hungarian relationship. END SUMMARY.

VWP Only Bilateral Irritant

3. (SBU) Somogyi opened by saying the U.S.-Hungarian
relationship was "practically problem-free." The only
irritant is the fact that Hungary is not a member of the
Visa Waiver Program (VWP). Somogyi noted the importance
of the visa issue in Hungary as the average citizen found
it hard to equate Hungary's strong support for the U.S.
and its EU status with a continuing visa requirement.
When Hungary first entered the EU there was a surge of
travel to Austria - a psychological reaction to years of
living behind the iron curtain. Visa-free travel, he
claimed, would make the largest positive impact among
average Hungarians. He stated the recent VWP legislation
was a positive first step, and promised to work with the
administration and Congress to see what more could be
done. The Deputy Secretary replied that, from the
President on down, the USG is committed to finding a
resolution on VWP for our allies.

Remaining Engaged on Cuba

4. (U) Somogyi stated that the U.S.-Hungarian relationship
was increasingly defined in terms of Hungary's support on

a range of regional and global issues. He cited Hungary's leadership of an Afghan PRT and its offer to host the C-17 Strategic Airlift Capability consortium as good examples of this. He also pointed to Cuba, where Somogyi said that Hungary was committed to promoting democracy. He noted that the GOH and U.S. Ambassador had recently exchanged notes finalizing an agreement for Hungary to accept 28 Cuban refugees from Guantanamo Bay, an initiative that even the Hungarian opposition had supported. The Deputy Secretary thanked Hungary for its support and noted our

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resistance to efforts in some parts of Europe to

facilitate the transfer of power from Castro to his brother. We saw this as trading one dictator for another.

Misunderstood Relations with Russia

15. (C) Somogyi noted the difficulties of dealing with a new assertive Russia, and claimed that Hungary's position towards Russia is misunderstood. Hungary cannot neglect Russia, he said, because of its size and level bilateral trade. However, Hungary "supports the values of NATO and the EU 100 percent." Somogyi wished the EU was more active in promoting energy security, and said Hungary is looking for energy alternatives, evidenced by the upcoming Nabucco and Hungarian AmCham energy conferences. The Deputy Secretary replied that it is in Hungary's interest to diversify their energy supply, and support diversification of Central Asia's energy markets.

Same Wavelength on Kosovo

16. (C) The Deputy Secretary observed that the USG and Hungary appear to be "on the same wavelength" regarding Kosovo. Even if the current negotiations do not reach any agreement, the U.S. supported Kosovo's independence. Somogyi explained that some EU members are reluctant to see an independent Kosovo, and are stalling. He thought it would be a mistake to let the process stall if there is no consensus, and noted Hungary's efforts to make clear that an independent Kosovo would not become a precedent for the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina or for other minority regions to declare independence.

Upcoming Visits

17. (SBU) Somogyi mentioned that FM Goncz is planning to visit the U.S. in early October to open a new Consulate General in Chicago, and that he is planning to lead a business road show to Texas in coming months.

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